The issue of restrictions on dangerous dogs arose following the mauling death of four-year-old Ayen Chol. Leanne Pelen, in her opinion piece *These dogs are guns without a safety catch,* published in the Herald Sun, contends that the laws in Victoria must be changed to further restrict pit bull terriers and protect people. She uses a concerned, emotional and occasionally bordering on outraged tone to engage a broad audience of readers. In the same paper Rachel Andersson responds in a reasonable and sympathetic tone. Her opinion piece, titled *With training and love, they are devoted pets,* is directed at those who fear pit bull terriers. She argues that the restrictions on pit bull terriers are both unnecessary and unfair.

Pelen uses emotive language and imagery to tug at the reader’s heart strings and convince them of the dangers posed by pit bull terriers. She uses phrases such as ‘tragic death’, ‘senseless and needless’ and ‘viciously attacked’ to help the reader to visualise the attack. She uses an anecdote detailing a dog attack on her own family to establish her credibility and knowledge of the issue. She appeals to the reader’s sense of fear, stating that people should be ‘more aware … of just how little the Government will protect you if you are the victim of a dog attack’. This appeal, along with her use of inclusive language, draws in the reader and makes them feel connected to the issue.

Andersson begins by stating her sympathy for the victims of dog attacks, and then moves on to argue against those who would ‘choose to condemn an entire dog breed’ based on isolated attacks. This immediately positions the reader to think of her as both moral and reasonable. Andersson uses an anecdote to establish herself as someone with knowledge of and familiarity with pit bull terriers. She also uses appeals to patriotism – ‘a compassionate and moral nation’ – to position the reader, as an Australian, to agree.

Pelen and Andersson’s articles are similar in their use of appeals to decency and common sense. Pelen states that ‘the laws are still so unjust’ and that ‘one death by mauling is too many.’ She encourages the reader to think of Ayen Chol’s death as a tragedy which could have been avoided, and to think that changing the law is a simple matter of common sense. Andersson’s use of common sense appeals is targeted differently; she writes of her personal experience with pit bulls which ‘prompted (her) to rationalise (her) fear of pit bulls’. The implicit argument here is that if she could use common sense or rationality to overcome her fear, so could any other rational human being.

The main difference between Pelen and Andersson’s articles is in the tone. Pelen’s tone is concerned, emotional and at times bordering on outraged. This is shown in such phrases as ‘terrible day’ ‘sickening attack’, ‘vicious animals.’ Her use of outraged rhetorical questions adds to this tone. Andersson, on the other hand, employs a moral yet reasonable tone. She describes pit bulls as ‘intelligent’, ‘reliable’ and ‘gentle’, and pit bull owners as ‘diligent and responsible.’ The two articles also differ in their target audience. Pelen’s article is aimed at a broad audience and assumes a general hatred of pit bulls, whereas Andersson aims her article at those who hate and fear pit bulls, attempting to persuade them otherwise.

Overall, Pelen is in favour of further restricting ownership and breeding of pit bull terriers, whereas Andersson believes further restrictions are unnecessary. Pelen’s emotional tone, coupled with her harrowing personal anecdote of a pit bull attack, position the moral and compassionate reader to agree with her. Andersson’s use of a rational tone is at times compelling, but her confused anecdotes detract from her otherwise convincing argument. Pelen’s argument is clearly more convincing.